



**NORTHEAST REGION  
INVENTORY AND MONITORING PROGRAM**

**NPSpecies Certifier's Guide**

Version1: July 2004

**DRAFT**

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## Purpose of this Document

The NPSpecies database was developed as a means to store, manage and disseminate scientific information on the biodiversity of organisms in National Park Service (NPS) units throughout the United States and its territories. NPSpecies contains species lists of a variety of taxa including Vascular Plants, Fish, Birds, Amphibians, Reptiles and Mammals. For many park units, these databases contain numerous records and evidence including references, vouchers and observations.

Under the NPS Director's Order 11B Regarding Information Quality, data must be accurate and up-to-date. The NPS must ensure that information it releases is developed from reliable data sources and otherwise ensures information quality at each stage of information development. The NPS's methods for producing quality information must be made transparent, to the maximum extent practicable, through accurate documentation, use of appropriate internal and external review procedures, consultation with experts and users, and verification of the quality of the information disseminated to the public.

Taxa experts or certifiers are not expected to have in-depth knowledge of the NPSpecies database. However, certifiers must be able to efficiently use some aspects of the NPSpecies database to thoroughly and accurately complete a certification. This Certifier's Guide was developed to assist the Northeast Region (NER) Inventory and Monitoring Program's (I&M) certifiers in becoming familiar with the NPSpecies database and completing the certification process in a timely manner.

This guide:

- Lists the documents required to complete certification
- Lists available Certifier Training Documents and pertinent reference materials
- Lists the Step-by-Step process for completing a database certification
- Lists specific people to contact for help regarding certification

## **II. Required Documents and Exercises to Complete Certification**

The following documents and databases are essential for accurately completing database certification. The certifier should review the recommended documents and complete the NPSpecies Desktop Training and Quality Assurance (QA) exercises provided.

### **\_\_\_NER NPSpecies Certifier's Guide**

This document was developed by the NER to guide the certifier through an efficient certification.

**Available format: Hardcopy or Electronic (included on The Certifier's Information CD)**

**Request either format from NPSpecies Data Manager**

### **\_\_\_NER NPSpecies Data Entry And Data Management Standards Manual**

This document was developed by the NER to ensure the NPSpecies databases within this region are populated in a consistent manner.

**Available format: Hardcopy or Electronic (included on The Certifier's Information CD)**

**Request either format from NPSpecies Data Manager**

### **\_\_\_Combined Data Dictionary**

This data dictionary combines the I&M Servicewide and NER Data Dictionaries for easier use by the NER Certifier.

**Available format: Hardcopy or Electronic (included on The Certifier's Information CD)**

**Request either format from NPSpecies Data Manager**

### **\_\_\_NER NPSpecies QA Workbook**

The NER NPSpecies QA Workbook is adapted from the QA Workbook developed by the NPS Service-wide I&M Program. This is the main document used to assist certifiers with completing the certification process.

- **Available format: Electronic (CD)**

**Obtain the Certifier's Information CD from the NPSpecies Data Manager.**

### **\_\_\_NPSpecies Desktop Application**

The NPSpecies Desktop Application is the database used for certification. The certifier will use the front-end of this application for all aspects of certification.

**Available format: Electronic (Download or CD)**

- **Download from NPSpecies public access website**  
<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/apps/npspp/DesktopApp.htm> (It is suggested to do a **Combined Download** located in the last section of this webpage.)

**OR**

- **Obtain The Certifier's Information CD from the NPSpecies Data Manager.**  
(This is the recommended method for those with dial-up Internet connection due to the download time required with dial-up connection)

— **Park Database**

The Park Database contains only the data for the certifier's assigned taxa.

Available format: Electronic (CD)

- **Obtain the Certifiers Database CD of your assigned park database from NPSpecies Data Manager**

— **QA Certification Form**

This is the form that is filled-out by the certifier in cooperation with the Network Point of Contact (POC ) after the certifier has completed the review of the specified database.

This form is located in the NER NPSpecies QA Workbook

**Available format: Electronic (CD)**

- **Obtain the Certifier's Information CD from NPSpecies Data Manager**

**Included on the Certifier's Information CD**

NER Certifiers' Guide

NER Data Entry and Data Management Standards Manual

Service-wide and NER Combined Data Dictionary

NER NPSpecies QA Workbook (including Certification Form)

NPSpecies Desktop Application

**Included on the Certifiers Database CD**

Assigned Park Database

### III. Training and Documentation

It is highly recommended that the certifier becomes familiar with the NPSpecies database before attempting to complete certification. **The NER NPSpecies QA Workbook** includes all the necessary training material (NPSpecies Desktop Training Exercises, QA Exercises and QA Exercise Databases), important background information regarding NPSpecies certification and an introduction to the NPSpecies database. In addition, the **NPSpecies Application** contains the Sample database (Sample\_data.MDB) used to complete the NPSpecies Desktop Training Exercises.

The NER NPSpecies Data Managers recommend completing the **NPSpecies Desktop Training Exercises** before attempting to work through the **QA Exercises**. If you are very familiar with editing in NPSpecies, skip the following exercises: Browsing & Reporting; Adding/Editing/Deleting Data. The approximate time to complete all training exercises is 6 hours.

Certifiers may also wish to go to the The NPSpecies Quality Assurance webpage: <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/apps/npspp/QA.htm>. This webpage provides background information regarding the certification process. The NER recommends focusing on the following documents in the **QA Policy Guidance Information/Data Integrity** section:

- The Draft Director's Order 66 and Sensitive Data in NPSpecies
- Sensitive Data in NPSpecies

Additional information and documentation on NPSpecies is available at the following web site: <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/apps/npspp>

## IV. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The NER recommended certification process is a two-step process that includes a **Database Review** for completeness and accuracy and then the actual **QA Certification**. The NPSpecies Data Manager completes a Preliminary Database Review before sending the database to the certifier. The Preliminary Database Review ensures that the certifier will not need to spend an enormous amount of time making changes to the database. If it appears that the database requires extensive editing, please contact your NPSpecies Data Manager regarding these issues so the database can be corrected and sent back to the certifier.

### Database Review:

1. Review References to ensure all available data and the most up-to-date data have been entered into NPSpecies
2. Review Species list to ensure no records need to be added or deleted
3. Use the Park Name Profile for each species to complete the following sections: Preferred Local Names, Checklist Information, Management Information, Record Information and add Data Sources listed in checklist fields to References if needed. For Checklist Information, all changes must be made within Species Profile to ensure that existing data is consistent with your changes and to ensure that data are not deleted. While working in the Park Name Profile, these procedures should be followed:
  - The default value for “created by/last modified by” box must checked and the certifiers first and last name must be entered into the adjacent field. This will indicate that the certifier made the most current changes to the database.
  - The “created date/last modified date” box should automatically be checked and the current date should show-up by default. If the date that shows-up adjacent to this box is incorrect, set the computer’s clock to the correct date.
  - Do not enter certifier name in the main ‘Data Source’ field in the “Record Information” section at the bottom of the Park Species Profile. This field is usually associated with the original data source-the first time a species was linked to a park’s database.
  - When the certifier changes a checklist category (i.e. Park Status, Abundance, Residency), add first and last name, year (ex. John Doe, 2004) to the “Data Source” field associated with the checklist category. This will allow all database users to see who edited and/or augmented the data present in these fields.
  - If adding information to Checklist Field Details, you must move the existing text and place it in the Comments field. Use Data Source format for citing information.

- Certifiers can add pertinent information to the “Comments” field within the “Record Information” section. If additional information is added to this field, the certifier must use Data Source format to add name, year in front of the information.

### Database Certification:

1. Identify certifier's local **Taxonomy**
2. Identify the **Local Accepted Names** used in the park for each organism. (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Local Classification)
3. Run QA Filters for **Local List** (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Local Classification)
4. Run QA Filters for **Park Status** of each organism that has the Local List checkbox checked. (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Checklist Fields)
5. Run QA Filters for **Abundance** of each organism that has the Local List checkbox checked and a Park Status of *Present in Park*. (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Checklist Fields)
6. Run QA Filters for **Nativity** for each organism that has the Local List checkbox checked. (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Checklist Fields)
7. Run QA Filter for “**Group by NA**” for Non-NA & NA Filters (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Checklist Fields)
8. Run QA Filters for **Management Fields** (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Management Fields)
9. Complete **Sensitivity** fields (QA Workbook: NPSpecies QA Exercise: Flag Sensitive Data)
10. Complete the Quality Assurance certification form and submit along with the desktop data file. (QA Workbook: QA Certification of NPSpecies)

## **VI. NER Contacts**

If you have questions and suggestions regarding the NPSpecies certification process, please call or email the NPSpecies Data Managers listed below. If you are not sure which network your assigned park falls into, the listed network contacts can direct you to the appropriate person.

### **Eastern Rivers and Mountains Network, Mid-Atlantic Network**

Jennifer Stingelin-Keefer  
NPSpecies Data Manager  
National Park Service Cooperator  
Pennsylvania State University  
204 Ferguson Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 863-1904  
[jls227@psu.edu](mailto:jls227@psu.edu)

### **Northeast Coastal and Barrier Network**

Linda Fabre  
NPSpecies Data Manager  
National Park Service Cooperator  
University of Rhode Island  
105 Coastal Institute in Kingston  
Kingston, RI 02881  
(401) 874-4305/(401) 364-3850  
[lfabre2@cox.net](mailto:lfabre2@cox.net)

### **Northeast Temperate Network**

Fred Dieffenbach  
Data Manager  
Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP  
54 Elm Street  
Woodstock, Vt 05091  
(802) 457-3368 ext. 36  
[fred\\_dieffenbach@nps.gov](mailto:fred_dieffenbach@nps.gov)